DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 407 713 EA 028 337

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TITLE From Mr. Wameke to Mr. Rivelle to Mr. Woodman: Images of Principals in Film and Television.

PUB DATE Mar 97

NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 24-28, 1997).

PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Bureaucracy; Content Analysis; *Cultural Images; Elementary Secondary Education; Films; Leadership; *Popular Culture; *Principals; *Stereotypes; Supervision; Television

ABSTRACT

Despite burgeoning literature that acknowledges the importance of the principalship in achieving and maintaining school effectiveness, principals have been depicted unfavorably in film and television as insecure autocrats, petty bureaucrats, and classic buffoons. This paper presents findings of a study that not only catalogued images of principals in selected movies and situation comedies on television, but also investigated the motivations behind, and the construction and reception of, such images. The study used a historical-cultural studies approach to analyze images of principals in film and television. Data were gathered through content analysis of over 35 television programs and films from 1950-1996. A total of 286 elementary and high school students and 49 teachers were also surveyed. Research questions included: (1) How are principals depicted in film and television? (2) To what extent are these images of principals confirmed by the experiences of students, teachers, parents, and principals themselves? (3) What are the influential historical forces or factors that have shaped our images of principals? and (4) To what extent do principals contribute to the perpetuation of stereotyped images? Findings suggest that reconceptualizing the theory and practice of administration based on an "ethic of caring" should be a priority. (Contains 79 references.) (LMI)

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From Mr. Wameke to Mr. Rivelle to Mr. Woodman: Images of Principals in Film and Television

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Instructional Supervision SIG

Chicago, Illinois

March 25, 1997

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From Mr. Wameke to Mr. Rivelle to Mr. Woodman: Images of Principals in Film and Television

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ABSTRACT: *Despite burgeoning literature that acknowledges the importance of the principalship in achieving and maintaining school effectiveness, principals have been depicted unfavorably in film and television as insecure autocrats, petty bureaucrats, and classic buffoons. This study was undertaken to not only catalogue images of principals in selected movies and situation comedies appearing on television, but also to investigate the motivations behind, and the construction and reception of, such images. The study results are based on a content analysis of over 35 television programs and films from 1950-1996 depicting principals. Research questions included: "How are principals depicted in film and television?"; "to what extent are these images of principals confirmed by the experiences of students, teachers, parents, and principals themselves?"; "What are the influential historical forces or factors that have shaped our images of principals?"; and "To what extent do principals contribute to the perpetuation of stereotyped images?" A historical/cultural studies approach served as the primary perspective or theoretical framework by which to analyze images of principals in film and television. Findings suggest that reconceptualizing the theory and practice of administration based on an "ethic of caring" should be a priority.*

From Mr. Wameke to Mr. Rivelle to Mr. Woodman:
Images of Principals in Film and Television

INTRODUCTION

To what degree do forms of popular culture, particularly television and film, intentionally transmit negative images of principals for purposes of sensationalism and entertainment? Are these stereotyped views reflective of reality? Do these images, whether transmitted intentionally or incidentally, play a role in the social construction of knowledge about principals and their work? Do fictional and nonfictional portrayals of principals in popular culture contribute to public understanding and self-perception of the work of principals? The *degree* to which forms of popular culture actually construct public and personal knowledge through images portrayed can be debated (*Action in Teacher Education*, 1987; Collins, Radner, & Preacher-Collins, 1993; Fiske, 1989; Mitchell, 1980). Beyond debate, however, is that the media in the form of television and cinema, as well as other forms of popular culture, does shape public opinion and influence personal identity (Bandura, 1977; Cortes, 1995; Edmonds, 1982; Ferguson, 1991; Gans, 1967; Hall, 1977; McLuhan, 1966; Salomon, 1997).

In a very real sense television, film, and other forms of popular culture serve as the first images that children and the lay public have about principals. These images form powerful influences on the way we think about principals and their work. Images of principals represented by popular culture also serve as a stimulus for self-introspection. Popular culture, then, can serve as a important vehicle for understanding the professional identity of principals and how others may perceive that identity. A cultural studies approach examines the dynamic interaction between cultural images of principals in film, for example, and perceptions that the lay public may have of principals. As this study will demonstrate, various forms of media often portray principals in less than complimentary ways. Recent images of teachers in film and television suggest that they, in comparison to principals, are sophisticated high fliers and are competent in managing incredibly complex learning environments (Farber & Holm, 1990; Farber, Holm, & Provenzo, 1992). Principals, on the other hand, are dullards, simplistic, petty bureaucrats who haven't the foggiest notion of what teaching is all about.

This paper will explore the following questions: "how are principals depicted in film and television?"; "to what extent are these images of principals confirmed by the experiences of students, teachers, parents, and principals themselves?"; "what are the influential historical forces or factors that have shaped our images of principals?"; "to what extent do principals contribute to the perpetuation of stereotyped images?"; and "how could an "ethic of caring" reconceptualize traditional ways of conceiving the principalship?" This paper essentially documents certain images of principals that have persisted over time and how these popular cultural images have influenced our understanding of the way the professional work of principals is constructed and viewed. Exploring images of principals encultured through popular forms of media provides insight into how the work and identity of principals as well as our images of them may be framed.

PROCEDURES AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Although a significant body of literature exists in the study of popular culture and its influence on the social construction of knowledge (Cortes, 1995) and how teachers, in particular, are viewed in popular culture (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Joseph & Burnaford, 1994; Weber & Mitchell, 1995), no research has been undertaken, in any depth, regarding the images of principals in popular culture. Four basic analytical dimensions can be addressed in examining the role of popular culture in the social construction of the work of principals:

1. *Content Analysis*: An examination of the content of television and cinema in order to determine various themes or consistent images of principals.
2. *Control Analysis*: An examination of the extent to which media, for example, consciously creates and disseminates images of principals.
3. *Impact Analysis*: An examination of the short-term and long-term impact that popular culture may have on images of principals among viewers and principals themselves.
4. *Interpretive Analysis*: An examination of the ways principals may contend with the views depicted through popular culture.

Although all four dimensions are important they do not necessarily have to be developed sequentially. Moreover, since the research reported in this paper is exploratory, an in depth analysis that incorporates all four basic analytical dimensions, described above, is beyond the scope of this paper, especially since such an attempt could constitute a publication far beyond a paper presentation. Although this paper will focus on raising, at least, some questions in all four dimensions, its primary intent will be to conduct a content analysis of the images of principals portrayed in television and film. An explanation of why such images have persisted will necessarily involve some interpretive analysis as well.

A total of thirty-five films and television shows (mostly sitcoms) between 1950 and 1996 were viewed to describe how principals were portrayed. Data sources included video stores, cable television, and visits to the Museum of Broadcasting and the Museum of Radio and Television, both located in New York City. Two questions guided the survey: "what image is communicated?"; and "what type of principal is portrayed?" Essentially, any scene that depicted a principal was viewed and transcribed. Transcripts of relevant scenes were reviewed repeatedly until major themes were identified. To verify accurate identification and naming of themes, graduate students were asked to review transcripts to identify categories and themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Use of comparative content analysis (e.g., Holsti, 1969; Marshall & Rossman, 1989) allowed for generation and verification of themes.

The image of the principal, as the prototypical principal, is fairly consistent. Three distinct, yet related, views have been portrayed in film and television. The first view is that of the authoritarian principal who employs autocratic administrative practices.1 Ruling by fiat and relying on

1. Although a distinction can be made between those principals who are essentially benevolent autocrats and malevolent autocrats, images in media depict principals, by in large, in negative ways.

intimidation, principals of this type, mostly male, legitimize their methods based on hierarchical and patriarchical sources of authority. Characteristic of this image of a principal is Mr. Wameke (played by John Hoyt) in the 1955 classic film, ***Blackboard Jungle***. Mr. Wameke is the stereotypical middle-aged authoritarian principal characterized by Ayers (1994) as "harsh and aloof." Another classic example of this authoritarian, almost dictatorial-type principal can be found in the film ***Lean on Me***. The image of the principal-as-despot is once again reinforced by profiling Joe Clark, the real-life former principal of Eastside High School in Paterson, New Jersey. Although more raucous and flamboyant than Mr. Wameke, Joe Clark (portrayed by Morgan Freeman) is the prototypical autocrat.

A second prevalent image depicted in film and television is the principal-as-bureaucrat. This type is characterized by the principal who is overly concerned with administrative reports, scheduling exigencies, and logistical procedures. Adhering to organizational mandates at the expense of individual needs is of primary concern. These principals are often depicted as humorless, feckless petty bureaucrats who become sticklers for every jot, tittle, and iota inscribed in the Board of Education's rules and regulations. Judd Hirsch's portrayal of a principal, Mr. Rivelle, in the 1984 film ***Teachers*** is indicative of the penchant for administrators to maintain, at all costs, bureaucratic mandates, even above ethical and moral imperatives related to teaching and learning. Mr. Rivelle succumbs to bureaucratic and organizational policies in asking for a teacher's resignation for fear that he will testify that the school was indeed liable for not teaching a former high school graduate to read. Roles played by Mr. Bestor as principal and Mr. McKay as supervisor-for-supplies in ***Up the Down Staircase*** also reinforce this image of the petty bureaucrat. Often characterized by teachers as snoopervisors (Glanz, 1989) and by-the-book supervisors, these principals reflect an image in which organizational demands supersede individual needs.

Principal-as-numskull represents a third view of principals depicted in television and film. Relying on caricature and exaggeration, these images imply that principals are dimwitted dolts who haven't the foggiest notion of what is transpiring in the school. Almost always male, these principals are easily cajoled by outlandish schemes conceived by presumably far brighter and more creative students, and even teachers. Mr. Woodman, in ***Welcome Back, Kotter***, and Mr. Belding, in ***Saved by the Bell***, are classic examples of this type of principal. Although separated by over twenty years these sitcoms clearly illustrate a persistent theme in the portrayal of principals as out-of-touch, dullards who serve as objects of ridicule and buffoonery. The recent depiction of Mr. Edward R. Rooney in the film *Ferris Buellers Day Off* is also representative of this third image of the principal.

FINDINGS: IMAGES OF PRINCIPALS IN FILM AND TELEVISION

Mr. Wameke in the *Blackboard Jungle*

Perhaps the foremost image of a principal embedded in many people's minds, especially for those of us over the age of thirty, is encapsulated in Richard Brooke's 1955 classic film ***Blackboard Jungle***. As the title implies, the school as the context in which this drama plays out is nothing less than a *jungle*. Aroused by the pounding rhythms of Bill Haley and the Comets' "Rock Around the Clock" and images of rowdy urban teens milling aimlessly, but sometimes threateningly, around the schoolyard, the audience senses the trouble lies ahead. Capitalizing on racial stereotypes of the Irish and Puerto Ricans especially, this film uncovers an image of urban schools that is characterized by deplorable physical conditions, overworked and burnt-out teachers, and occupied by hopeless uneducable delinquents. The film essentially portrays an idealistic teacher Richard Dadier (played by Glenn Ford) who having returned from a stint in the Korean War decides to pursue his dream of becoming a teacher. After a rather inauspicious interview, Mr. Dadier is given his first teaching assignment. Cautiously optimistic after hearing about "the discipline problem" in the school, the new teacher proceeds nonetheless to struggle to "save" the children from a life of indifference and prejudice. The images of teacher-as-savior and urban students-as-savages are among the film's major cultural messages.

Perhaps less significant and certainly more subtle is the image portrayed of the principal, Mr. Wameke. Stern, aloof, and humorless, the principal is depicted as the classic principal-as-autocrat. Our first glimpses of Mr. Wameke indicate his conservative dress, stoic manner, and privileged position in the school. Perhaps the most memorable image is of the ruler he clasps, as a king might hold his scepter. At the start of the first faculty meeting, the vice-principal announces "Ladies and gentlemen, your principal." In walks Mr. Wameke to greet his faculty before the start of a new year. Prior to this scene our hero, Mr. Dadier experiences first-hand who the boss of a school really is. After offering Mr. Dadier a teaching position, Mr. Wameke asks, "Any questions?" Hesitatingly, the neophyte says, "Just one question, sir, the uh. . . discipline problem here." Incredulous, Mr. Wameke says, "I beg your pardon?!" "Well, I understand . . ." Mr. Wameke interrupts and inches closer to Mr. Dadier: "There is no discipline problem in this school, Mr. Dadier, as long as I am principal!" The message is clear.

Other scenes that demonstrate the principal's authoritarian style include the time when he chastises a veteran teacher, Mr. Murdock, for slapping a student. Raising his voice in anger and frustration, Mr. Wameke admonishes the aggressive teacher in front of other teachers: "If you can't control yourself . . ." "Yes, sir," responds Murdock sheepishly. "Dadier!" shouts the principal. As Mr. Dadier approaches the principal's office door, Murdock whispers, "He's rough today." The principal proceeds to accuse Dadier of racial prejudice based on a report he received from a student whom the principal refuses to identify. "You listen," shouts the principal, "I don't care if a boy's skin is black, yellow, or purple, he gets the same teaching, the same breaks as any white boy. Do you understand? Do you?!" In this unforgettable scene, Mr. Wameke, at this point in the diatribe, threateningly raises his ruler nervously shaking it at Dadier and shouting, "There's enough immorality in the world without your adding to it, enough hatred, enough blind stupidity."

Despite numerous messages this film imparts such as the struggles and travails of teaching urban students who are at-risk (Ayers, 1994), the images most relevant to this study are those that viewers receive about the demeanor and leadership style of the principal, Mr. Wameke. Dictatorial, aloof, and antagonistic, the principal represents an image that has been reinforced several times in other films such as *Dead Poets Society and Lean on Me*.

In *Lean on Me*, classic despot, Joe Clark communicates clearly who's in charge of the school. Upon his arrival during a faculty meeting, a representative from the teacher's union welcomes the new principal. "We want to welcome Mr. Clark to Eastside. We've heard so much about you and we want to tell you what we've done in anticipation of your arrival. . ." Interrupting the teacher, Clark bellows, "You may sit down Mr. O'Mally! Think you could run this school? If you could, I wouldn't be here, now would I?" Clark paces about the room and thunders, "No one talks at my meetings - No one - You take out your pencils and write." Clark continues, "This is an institution of learning. If you can't control it, how can you teach?!" After demoting the football coach, Clark tells him "and if you don't like it Mr. Darnell, you can quit - the same goes for the rest of you." Clark ends his diatribe by explaining that "this is not a damn democracy . . . my word is law. . . There's only one boss in this place and it's me!"

Mr. Rivelle in *Teachers*

Nearly thirty years after the appearance of *Blackboard Jungle*, the 1984 film *Teachers* shares many of the same features of its predecessor. The movie portrays a teaching and administrative staff coping to survive amidst a chaotic school environment characterized, in part, by student, teacher, and parental apathy. The film stars Nick Nolte as Alex Jerrel, a caring hero-teacher trying to motivate his students despite enormous odds. Mr. Jerrel's efforts are hampered by administrative forces that encourage conformity to organizational mandates. Jerrel's chief protagonist is principal Mr. Roger Rivelle (played by Judd Hirsch). Although Mr. Rivelle, not unlike Mr. Wameke in *Blackboard Jungle*, is not afraid to use intimidation as a means of coercing compliance, he does represent a unique image of a principal. Mr. Rivelle can best be characterized as principal-as-bureaucrat.

Illustrative of this penchant towards emphasizing organizational exigencies over individual needs are a number of critical scenes. In the first scene Mr. Jerrel tries to motivate Eddie (played by Ralph Maccio of *Karate Kid* fame) by encouraging him to report on some of the deficiencies of the school. Encouraging students to utilize any method of reporting, Eddie takes candid photos of selected staff members that eventually get published in a local newspaper. Many of the photos are unflattering such as a picture of a teacher sleeping at his desk. Mr. Rivelle fumes after viewing the photos in the newspaper. With Eddie sitting outside Rivelle's office, the principal asks Jerrel, "He claims you okayed this, did you?" Hesitating for a moment, Jerrel says "Yes." Dismissing Eddie from the office, the principal berates Mr. Jerrel. "Where the hell are your brains? Do you know how much embarrassment this is going to cause us?" Jerrel tries to justify his teaching methods, albeit unsuccessfully. Mr. Rivelle finally ends the conversation by informing Jerrel that "This goes on your permanent record!" To which Jerrel responds sarcastically, "Does this mean I have to stay after school too?"

In another scene, Mr. Rivelle chastises the physical education teacher for getting a student pregnant. "Do you know what this is going to do to

the school? Do you know how this is going to look?!!" In the final scene of this popular movie, Jerrel, after averting attempts by the principal to resign for not complying with administrative demands, lectures Mr. Rivelle about placing frivolous administrative concerns above the interests of students. "The damn school wasn't built for us Roger. It wasn't built for your unions, your lawyers, or your other institutions - it's built for the kids!! They're not here for us, we're here for them."

Virtuous, ethical, moral, and humane, Mr. Jerrel stands in sharp contrast to the image portrayed of the administration. Disingenuous, petty, if not corrupt, and uncaring of student needs and more concerned with maintaining the status quo, the principal-as-bureaucrat is embedded in viewer's minds.

The image of principal as primarily interested in organizational exigencies over students' interests and needs remains a consistent theme. In the updated 1996 version of the original classic, *To Sir With Love*, Sydney Portier returns to America to teach in an urban school beset by many of the typical problems facing many inner city schools. Promising not to disclose information about an incident in which a gun is confiscated from one particular student, the teacher inevitably confronts the principal over the issue. Sydney Portier explains that the school's priority should be the welfare and care for this particular student. The principal retorts, "That's easy to say from where you stand, but I have to think about the stability of the whole school, not just one isolated student or another." Surprised and perhaps disappointed by the principal's insensitivity to students, the teacher responds, "But that's what a school is, Horace, one kid - and another, and another."

A recent movie, *Dangerous Minds*, typifies the principal-as-bureaucrat stereotype when a new teacher (played by Michelle Pfeiffer) enters the high school principal's office without knocking. "This is an office, we knock before we enter," explains Mr. George Grandey, a stodgy African-American administrator sitting behind a desk. Stern, humorless, stoic, and ombudsman for the school's curriculum policy, the principal cautions the young teacher not to stray from the prescribed curriculum. "Follow the curriculum dictated by the board of education . . . You must go along with our policies."

Mr. Woodman in *Welcome Back, Kotter*

A third image emerges from popular culture as represented this time in television and, certainly, reinforced in many movies. The principal-as-numskull is perhaps the most popular and hilarious image of a principal. Ridiculed and easily manipulated, Mr. Woodman in *Welcome Back, Kotter* is a typical example of principal-as-buffoon. *Welcome Back, Kotter*, a hit television sitcom in the late 1970s, depicts Gabe Kotter (played by comedian Gabe Kaplan who created the series) as an unorthodox teacher who works with a group of academically unmotivated students known as "Sweathogs." Kotter is continually harangued by a pompous, overbearing principal who no one takes very seriously.

The image of principal-as-dimwit is evidenced in nearly every episode of this hit sitcom. In one scene Freddie "Boom Boom" Washington, a black student stereotyped in not very favorable ways, joins Horseshack, simpleton and scapegoat of the "Sweathogs," in selling school supplies. In comes Puerto-Rican-Jewish "Sweathog" Juan Epstein to complain about a pencil he bought from "Boom-Boom" and Horseshack. "I got a complaint against this pencil you sold me - it don't work." Horseshack looking at the small

pencil moans, "Ohhhhh, . . . what seems to be the problem?" Epstein replies, "Every time I write with it, it gets duller and when I sharpen it, it gets shorter. What we have here is a vicious cycle - duller, shorter, duller, shorter, I don't know what to do?" Along comes Mr. Woodman as "Boom-Boom" says, "You know what they say around here. Any time something keeps getting duller and shorter, they make it the PRINCIPAL!" The boys laugh uncontrollably as the principal shouts, "hyennas! You are all hyennas."

Mr. Woodman, typical of this genre of principal, is further characterized as totally unaware of what is really transpiring in the school, frequently unfamiliar with student culture and language, and possessing no sense of humor. In the premiere episode of the series Woodman, played by John Sylvester White, is described "as someone who drinks prune juice because he loves the taste of it." Although Woodman is both autocratic and bureaucratic, he doesn't engender the fear and respect of other such principals. Instead, the students throw paper at him (as he responds "animals, you're all animals") and is told on numerous occasions, "Up your nose with a rubber hose!"

A more recent popular sitcom, ***Saved by the Bell***, reinforces the image of principal-as-dimwit. Mr. Belding represents the classic buffoon-type principal portrayed in many films and television programs. Almost every episode reveals the naivety and silliness of the principal in this popular sitcom of the 1990s. One representative scene shows Mr. Belding substituting for Mr. Johnson, the teacher-in-charge of detention. Screech, a nerd-type character, tries to get into the detention room to speak with his buddy, Zach who is serving detention at the time. Mr. Belding, trimming a banzai tree at the desk while making karate-type yells, refuses to let him enter. Screech calls Belding a "doofus." "What did you say?" "I called you a doofus, you big dork." Screech is placed in detention and once again outsmarts the principal, who apparently is easily and frequently duped.

Occasionally, a single television show or film depicts all three aspects of principals as autocrats, bureaucrats, and dimwits. A recent made-for-TV movie, ***Kidz in the Woods***, highlights a dedicated history teacher (played by Dave Thomas) who takes eight academically and emotionally troubled high school students on a summer class trip during which they retrace the Oregon Trail via wagon trains. The object of the exercise is to "show how yesterday's events can help solve today's problems." The principal, against this unorthodox experiment, is portrayed as autocrat, bureaucrat, and, ultimately, dimwit. The vice-principal, playing a vital role in the movie, is also depicted in various negative ways, at least during most of the movie. This film also demonstrates an interesting and not uncommon relationship between a male principal and a female vice-principal.2

Mr. Henry Dunbar, a middle-aged conservative high school principal, confirms his role as petty bureaucrat when he chastises renegade history teacher, Mr. Foster who is the main character in this amusing made-for-TV movie. Dunbar calls Foster into his office and demands that he follow the prescribed curriculum. "What's obvious to me is that you blame me because I insist you follow my standard curriculum." "Your standard curriculum," Foster retorts, "is sub-standard and I blame you for not accepting the responsibility for teaching these kids more than is in their

2. Although not relevant for discussion in this paper, the gender issue in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of principals need further exploration (see, e.g., Hill & Ragland, 1995).

books." Foster proceeds to leave Dunbar's office as the bell rings. "I gotta go . . . unless of course *you* want to teach my class." Dunbar remains silent. The principal's incompetence is not too subtlety inferred. The image as incompetent, bureaucrat is effectively communicated. In a later scene the vice-principal is similarly portrayed as having little, if any, teaching experience. At a school board meeting, Vice Principal Duffy defends her experience by asserting "I did teach . . . for several semesters, that is."

Mr. Dunbar, determined to waylay Foster's efforts at succeeding with his innovative strategies, demands that his vice-principal, Miss Felicia Duffy, videotape the class trip as students inevitably get into trouble. Armed with this documentation, Dunbar can convince the board that he was right. Miss Duffy aghast at the principal's deceit and unethical behavior, tries to convince her boss not to pursue this campaign. Relying on his superordinate position in the school hierarchy and employing an autocratic tactic, Dunbar tells Duffy, "You unlike Foster don't have tenure." Duffy reluctantly is coerced to comply. Interestingly, Duffy, as vice-principal, complies with the chicanery rather than maintaining her integrity by adhering to more ethical standards of behavior. The image of the principal as dimwit is ultimately imparted as Dunbar's plan is foiled. Once again, principals are portrayed negatively as compared to more idealistic, intelligent teachers.3

CONFIRMATION OF NEGATIVE IMAGES OF PRINCIPALS

Having found that popular culture as represented, in part, by cinema and television, depicted the principal in less than favorable ways and that three images of principals were most common, I wanted to undertake a tentative impact analysis (Cortes, 1995) to ascertain whether or not similar negative views were held by people closely connected to schools (e.g., students and teachers) and by individuals who ordinarily have little contact with public education (i.e., the lay public). Data was collected by

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3. One of the early views of a principal that demonstrates all three tendencies, autocrat-bureaucrat-dimwit, is seen in the classic 1950's series, *Our Miss Brooks*. Mr. Conklin, played by Gale Gordon, is portrayed as a stern conservative principal who is continually lampooned by Miss Brooks (played by Eve Arden), the wisecracking high school English teacher. In the premiere episode, Miss Brooks hurries past the principal's office. "Halt! charges Mr. Conklin, as the audience gets its first glimpse of the principal. "I was just on my way to the cafeteria," explains Miss Brooks. Chastising her, he says, "May I remind you that you are traversing the hallway of a public high school, not the cinder path of the colosseum." "I'll slow down, Sir." The principal continues, "Before you go there is something I want to talk to you about. Would you mind loping into my office," he says sarcastically. "But Sir." "In girl!" he shouts. Conklin's autocratic image is buttressed numerous times by his proclivity to support school regulations, at all costs. Yet, despite this serious image, Mr. Conklin is continually outwitted by the clever teacher and more often than not, becomes the recipient of her ridiculous and sometimes hair-brained schemes. Very annoying and mischievous, Miss Brooks in the premiere episode, for instance, accidentally squirts ink all over Mr. Conklin's suit. *Our Miss Brooks* clearly illustrates the image that principals can act authoritative and official-like, yet should not be taken too seriously.

It should also be pointed out that a recent spate of sitcoms during the fall 1996 TV season reflect tendencies to portray principals as autocratic dimwitted bureaucrats. See, for example, characters in leadership positions in the WB's *Nick Freno: Licensed Teacher* and *The Steve Harvey Show*. Two recent movie releases reflect the principal as autocrat and dimwit, respectively: *Matilda* and *High School High*.

administering an anonymous short survey that asked respondents, in part, to make word associations with the word "principal." Respondents comprised 178 elementary and 108 high school students in urban/suburban areas of New York and New Jersey. A similar survey was administered to 49 teachers (26 elementary and 23 high school teachers). The sample of teachers and students is clearly not representative of all students and teachers, yet responses indicated that students as a group and teachers as a group held uniform views about principals.

Respondents were asked to make word associations for principals whom they knew and for principals they recalled portrayed on television or in movies. Findings suggest that responses for both categories were, by in large, equally unfavorable. Students, as a group, were somewhat more generous in their descriptions of principals, however. Terms such as "pal", "good guy"; "okay", "helpful"; and "smart" were alluded to by some student respondents. These students did stress that images of most principals depicted in popular media were unflattering. Regardless of the source, however, the overwhelming student response was unfavorable. Students characterized principals as "too strict", "annoying", "bossy", "boring", "jerky", "foolish", and "mean." Teachers, as a group, were more consistent in their grim recollections of principals. Teachers described principals as "intimidating", "bureaucratic", "control freaks", "autocratic," "petty", and "a waste of taxpayer's money." Although most lay respondents (85% of the 100 surveyed) favorably described principals as "cordial" and "competent", most, if not all, of them confirmed the negative images portrayed on TV and film. Most respondents were at a loss to explain why these negative images have remained fairly consistent and persistent.

Respondents were also asked to react to the potential interplay between reality and depictions of principals in popular media: "To what extent do the images of principals in television and film reflect reality?" Whereas most student respondents affirmed that images in media accurately reflected their perceptions of "real" principals, teachers were divided in their views. About half of the respondents thought that media representations were "mere hype and exaggerations," while the remaining respondents intimated that the images reflected reality, especially regarding principals-as-bureaucrats and autocrats.

Parenthetically, respondents (students, teachers, and the lay public) were also asked to describe the work of principals. Not surprisingly, most respondents equated principal's work as "walking the halls," "monitoring attendance of teachers and students," "completing paperwork," "balancing budgets," and "meeting with irate parents." Few respondents talked about principals engaged in supervision as the improvement of instruction. To be certain, popular cultural images of principals focus on everything but improving the quality of what goes on in classrooms. "How closely does this image actually reflect reality?" and what does this image tell us about public perceptions of what principals do?" are intriguing questions.

Interviews were conducted with eleven principals as well. The interview technique was chosen to understand more fully the experiences and views of these principals and the meaning they make of them (Seidman, 1991). Following the advice of Mishler (1986), the interviews were flexible and open-ended allowing for natural conversation. All of the participants attested to the negative images of principals portrayed in popular culture and particularly lamented the image of "principal-as-classic buffoon." They described the specific stereotypes that the media purvey as "venomous,

dysfunctional, and unfortunate." They were unable to explain in depth, however, why principals are depicted in such negative ways on television and in film. Some principals did say that cinema and television exaggerate or caricaturize school personnel because "the chief purpose of television, radio, and movies is to entertain." "Consequently," continued a 65-year old Caucasian male high school principal from New Jersey, "media portrays erroneous beliefs about the realities of the classroom." A 44-year old female elementary school principal from New Jersey shared her colleague's view: "The general public doesn't know the real issues that affect schools today and so for the most part you see unrealistic scenarios which put education and us in a poor light."

Although media such as television and film definitely serve to entertain, I think to assert that the primary reason principals are portrayed in such adverse ways based on hyperbole is a shortsighted, simple, and inadequate explanation. I think to rely on the media's general proclivity for exaggeration avoids consideration of other plausible and more profound explanations. I think a more fruitful response to images of principals as bureaucratic uncaring "snoopervisors" might be to ask, "to what extent do these images reflect even a tinge of reality?" And if indeed principals are perceived as such, two other questions might be explored: "Why have such images persisted?" and "What proactive measures might be taken to portray principals more favorably?"

A HISTORICAL/CULTURAL STUDIES PERSPECTIVE: IMAGES OF PRINCIPALS IN POPULAR CULTURE

The extent to which popular culture reflects reality or merely constructs imaginary images for entertainment purposes has not been verified in this study since this has not been our primary intent. Still, a cultural studies approach demonstrates the *influence* of media on images we have of principals and other administrators (Baker, 1996). The literature of popular culture demonstrates that images, "the way in which a person or thing is popularly perceived or regarded" (Funk & Wagnalls, 1986), form a public impression and thus shape reality. Perception is reality to the extent to which images communicated through various forms of popular culture are internalized, at least cognitively, by viewers or consumers of popular culture. According to cultural studies research, our understandings of various professions are shaped, to some degree, by the beliefs, viewpoints, and values explicitly or implicitly transmitted by television and cinema. Culturally shared cognitive models that communicate, for example, that principals are arrogant bureaucrats influence tacit assumptions we have about principals, structure the way we think about them, and significantly, shape the way principals think about themselves (Holland & Quinn, 1987; Mead, 1951/1962). Investigating the motivations behind, and the construction and reception of, these images becomes a foremost concern of any reflective educator (Schon, 1987). Uncovering the cognitive models that, unbeknownst to us, structure our face-to-face interactions with, for instance, teachers, assumes priority. By asking, "to what extent do we contribute to these images?", we may begin to uncover tacit assumptions and taken-for-granted beliefs about the way principals must act and relate to others. Only then, it seems to me, can we begin to debunk fictional caricatures of principals in films such as *Teachers*, *The Principal*, and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and then to conceive of novel ways of understanding the principalship.

Why then are principals, at least as signified in popular culture, stereotyped as bureaucratic despots who are distant, stoic, and uncaring? These cultural images have become embedded in our cognitive models in large measure due to the bureaucratic legacy of faultfinding-inspectional supervision that has become synonymous with the public image of the principalship. Historical analysis can help uncover this legacy and provide clues as to why this legacy has persisted.

The Legacy of Bureaucracy and Autocracy

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, schools were controlled by loosely-structured, decentralized ward boards. Superintendents and principals had little authority to affect educational policy and implement meaningful programs or curricula. In the late nineteenth century, however, educational reformers sought to transform schools into a tightly-organized and efficiently operated centralized system (Tyack, 1974). These reform efforts brought order and organization to an otherwise chaotic, corrupt, and inefficient school environment. It was during this tumultuous period that supervision became an important tool by which superintendents and, to a lesser extent, principals would gain control over schools.

In order to standardize and control urban education, these early principals utilized rather unsophisticated, inspectional methods. To achieve conformity, adherence to bureaucratic rules and regulations was axiomatic. The raison detra of supervision was to eradicate inefficiency and incompetence among the teaching force. Various elaborate rating forms were developed to accomplish this major objective of supervision. Improvement of instruction was less important than purging the schools of the inept. Principals using inspectional practices did not favorably view the competence of most teachers. For instance, Balliet (1894), a superintendent and former principal from Massachusetts, insisted that only two types of teachers existed: the efficient and the inefficient. The only way to reform the schools, thought Balliet, was to "secure a competent superintendent; second, to let him 'reform' all the teachers who are incompetent and can be 'reformed'; thirdly, to bury the dead" (pp. 437-438).

Some of the most prominent educators of the time advocated bureaucratic and autocratic supervisory practices. William Harold Payne (1875), author of the first published textbook on supervision and who was the first prominent educator who articulated the importance of supervision, believed that a successful, well-managed school could only be achieved through "competent administration and supervision." "Teachers need external aid, . . . they need to be told in definite terms, by some authority considered competent, both the quality and the quantity of work that can reasonably be undertaken." Payne asserted that teachers, in instructional matters, did "not know where to begin and how to proceed" (p. viii, 3).

Payne's (1875) belief in the superiority of the superintendent in managing schools and instructing teachers was informed by his philosophy of society in general. "Human society," said Payne, "is a hierarchy of forces. Organization implies subordination. If there is to be a plan, some one must devise it, while others must execute it, . . . in human society the many must follow the direction of the few." Payne continued, "It is not possible to conceive a state of society in which there are not inequalities based on gradations in the ability to govern, . . . Human society is organized on the principle that the weak are to be protected by the strong, . . . the

masses of mankind must voluntarily submit to the guidance of those who have the faculty of directing" (pp. 13-14).

Payne (1875) translated his notions of a "hierarchy of forces" in society to the situation in schools. The schools, said Payne, must "follow the law which prevails in all other industries - differentiation, classification, system, . . ." The teacher must be "held responsible" for the work he or she does in the classroom. The principal, continued Payne, "should be a responsible head, able to devise plans in general and in detail, and vested with sufficient authority to keep all subordinates in their proper places, and at their assigned tasks" (p. 17). Payne advocated strict supervision of teachers so that they would adhere to mandated curricula.

Payne's views were not atypical. Typifying inspectional and autocratic practices of supervisors during this time were the practices of the most influential educator in the late nineteenth century, William Torrey Harris. Harris (1892) believed that teachers "must accept the authority of the overseer, the expert, . . . the superintendent." Freedom, according to Harris, was not a viable option for teachers. Teachers need to be told in rather definite terms, said Harris, "what is acceptable practice and what is not." Concurring with his colleague, Gove (1899) said that "autocracy and despotism" were necessary in order to maintain an efficient public school system (p. 520).

The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the opinions and values of late nineteenth century reformers supported the establishment of a highly standardized and bureaucratized school system. These reformers realized that in order to attain standardization and regulation in curriculum and teaching the principal must be in total control of the management of urban education. Affected in part by the prevailing mood of the time towards urbanization, industrialism, and organization, as well as by his own particular values and priorities, the superintendent/supervisor inexorably moved toward bureaucracy as the primary means of managing urban schools.

This bureaucratic thrust inevitably influenced supervisory practice among principals who gained stature and authority in the early twentieth century. Although present in the nineteenth century, the principalship did not wield any power. Nor did it significantly affect the nature and character of schooling. The principal in the nineteenth century was essentially relegated to the relatively noninfluential position of "head teacher." Not until after about 1920 was the principal relieved of teaching duties. As Willard S. Elsbree and E. Edmund Reutter (1954) point out, the principal, up until the 1920s, would "take over classes on occasion, and demonstrate to the teacher exactly how the job should he done" (p. 231).

As schooling expanded so did the educational bureaucracy, with the number of principals doubling between 1920 and 1930. Educators accounted for this increase with industrial metaphors which was in consonance with the "efficiency" movement that dominated industrial and later educational settings (Callahan, 1962). Elsbree and Reutter (1954) explained the role and function of principals as follows: "The principal was looked upon as a kind of foreman who through close supervision helped to compensate for ignorance and lack of skill of his subordinates" (p. 231). Due to increasing administrative duties, however, the principalship gradually shifted away from direct inspections, classroom supervision, and instructional development, and assumed a more managerial position.

Although advocacy for more democratic methods emerged in early part of this century, in large measure due to dissatisfaction with the negative effects of bureaucracy in education, the stigma associated with supervision as practiced by principals and other supervisors was firmly entrenched. The image, reputation, or expectation of a principal as bureaucrat-autocrat is not surprising given the circumstances under which supervisory positions arose in education. Principals were continuously and vehemently criticized for autocratic practices and bureaucratic adherence to organizational mandates over individual needs. As early as 1918, teachers criticized principals: "There is no democracy in our schools. . . . Here let me say that I do not want to give the impression that we are sensitive. No person who has remained a teacher for ten years can be sensitive. She is either dead or has gone into some other business," stated Sallie Hill (1918). Hill felt that supervisory practices of principals were "humiliating and tends to neither cheerfulness nor hopefulness" (p. 506).

Despite the emergence of more democratic methods in the form of scientific, clinical, and developmental supervision, criticisms of supervisory practices have continued unabated. Attitudinal surveys and related studies demonstrate that to many teachers principals remain "authoritarian, dictatorial, and unprofessional" (see, e.g., Punch, 1970; Johnson, 1990). Consequently, educators have sought to remove the "stigma" associated with supervision. The latest Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD, 1992) yearbook devoted to supervision corroborated the stigma of the supervisor as "snoopervisor" (p. v). Carl D. Glickman, the yearbook's editor, observed that "practitioners shun the word 'supervision' . . ." (p. 2). Thomas J. Sergiovanni, who wrote the concluding chapter, went so far as to propose that one day "supervision will no longer be needed" (p. 203).

To be sure, efforts to eliminate the stigma of the "supervisor" and of "supervision" are not new. As early as the third decade of the twentieth century, Reeder (1930) affirmed that supervision as inspection was being intensely criticized by teachers and that a change in title might reduce potential conflict. Barr, Burton, & Brueckner (1947) suggested that the term "supervisor" might be replaced by "consultant" or "adviser." In the fifties, titles such as "director or "coordinator" were common . Less common, although prevalent were "helping teacher" and "resource person" (Spears, 1953). In the sixties and seventies, "change agents" were in vogue. Wilhelms (1973) acknowledged the tendency for many educators to eschew the word "supervisor."

The persistence of bureaucracy is evident throughout the twentieth century (Cuban, 1994; Tyack & Tobin, 1994). Efforts to extricate supervision from its bureaucratic heritage have been challenging. Our intent here is not to chastise earlier educators for adopting bureaucratic governance of schools. Principals, at the time, did not understand that bureaucracy was inimical to the goals of free inquiry and individual initiative, necessary ingredients for the survival and effective operation of a school. They did not imagine that bureaucracy and education, in the words of Seeley (1985), "are like oil and water-they do not mix" (p. 21). It is unfair to hurl accusations at these reformers for not seeking alternatives to bureaucracy. History, however, has shown us that bureaucracy turned out not to be the "one best system," as hoped for, but probably was, in the words of Seeley (1985), the "one worst system" for education (pp. 41-49).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Despite burgeoning literature that acknowledges the importance of the principalship in achieving and maintaining school effectiveness, principals, for the most part, have been depicted unfavorably in film and television as insecure autocrats, petty bureaucrats, and classic buffoons. What can we learn from such findings? Surely we cannot dictate to television and cinema executives what types of images to portray of principals. Moreover, inaccurate and exaggerated negative images are depicted of virtually every profession: politicians, lawyers, doctors, nurses, and teachers. So what can we learn from examining images of principals in popular culture?

Why are principals portrayed as "buffoons"? At first glance, such depictions may serve simply as means of comical entertainment. After all, television and film also poke fun at authority figures in many other professions. Having a sense of humor about the portrayal of such images may be warranted. Yet, the unique nature or form of such satiric entertainment may point to some other insights.

A cultural studies perspective reveals that various forms of popular culture serve, in part, to critique established dogma and practices (see, e.g., Appelbaum, 1995; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Spring, 1992; Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Comedic satire is a method employed by popular culture to transmit subtle and, often, not too subtle messages about, for instance, principals as figure heads representing the school establishment. Portraying principals in such comical ways communicates, in part, that even though they occupy more prestigious positions in the school hierarchy and earn more money than teachers, they are fallible and should not be taken too seriously.[4] Teachers and students, often disempowered in the school hierarchy, are able, in a manner, to circumvent their subordinate status and demonstrate their autonomy by making the principal seem foolish.
Outrageous satire at the expense of principals essentially conveys a notion that hegemonic relationships, although perhaps appropriate in business settings or factories, may be ill-suited for schools.

What about images of principals-as-autocrats and bureaucrats? Schools, by in large, are organized bureaucratically. Principals and other supervisors serve to support and maintain organizational rules and regulations. Images in popular culture that portray principals as autocrats and bureaucrats are not surprising given their role expectations and responsibilities. As the historical analysis in the preceding section demonstrated autocratic and bureaucratic supervision are legacies that current day principals have to contend with. Perhaps, as principals, we need to at least be aware of the images that film makers and television producers are sending to viewers concerning the work we do in schools. We may then, for instance, counter such images by sharing with others our opposition to autocratic and bureaucratic practices.

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4. I am reminded of a cartoon, distributed at a principal's conference several years ago, that had an image of a rather funny looking man with humongous ears, buck teeth, and a long skinny neck. The caption read, "Six munce ugo I cutnt evn zpel pr!nciple an now I ar one." Apparently, principals themselves have internalized caricatures portrayed in popular culture. A study of the impact of negative images communicated through popular culture on principals themselves is warranted, although beyond the scope of this paper.

Nurturing and Maintaining an Ethic of Caring

Although a more thorough analysis of the consequences that these uncomplimentary images might have on both teachers and principals is intriguing, a more urgent question should be addressed in this last section of the paper. What can principals do to reconstruct such negative images? Many proposals have been promulgated to reform school administration, such as abandoning elitist traditional ways of governing by fostering shared decision-making. These and other reforms, although important, fall short of the mark without a more fundamental emphasis. Educational leaders, although responsible for organizational effectiveness, must first and foremost convey a genuine concern for the individual. As Jerrel reminded Rivelle in *Teachers*, "The damn school wasn't built for us Roger . . . it's built for the kids!! They're not here for us, we're here for them." Reconceptualizing the theory and practice of administration based on an "ethic of caring" should be a priority that can potentially influence current practice as well as inform how best to recruit and train our future principals (Beck, 1994).

Our image of a principal is culturally ingrained as a bureaucrat and snoopervisor, reinforced to a large extent, by images portrayed in popular media such as television and cinema. Constrained by a set of historical and political events, as well as social and cultural pressures, individuals assuming administrative positions operate from an hegemonic perspective. Although not all principals act as such, autocracy in school administration and supervision is legitimized and in consonance with bureaucratic school governance. Expectations are established for principals to, first and foremost, maintain organizational stability and adhere to bureaucratic mandates. Authority to carry out their mandates is conferred through hierarchical status. The metaphor for principal-as-bureaucrat and autocrat was established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That model, or as Sergiovanni (1991) would call a "mindscape" (p. 41), served as the basis for recruiting, hiring, and retaining supervisory personnel. This "mindset" or metaphorical language used to describe the role of a principal, for instance, is inappropriate and has contributed to the negative view of school administrators (Beck & Murphy, 1993). Forging a new mindset or paradigm for work in school administration takes on greater urgency.

Recruiting, hiring, and retaining principals who, first and foremost, demonstrate that individual needs supersede organizational requirements and bureaucratic regulations would reframe traditional conceptions of school administration. Fostering and emphasizing an "ethic of caring" among future principals would go far to challenge traditional conceptions of administration based on hierarchical, competitive, and bureaucratic paradigms. Redefining themselves as caring, sensitive people who encourage participation and engender trust but still attend to administrative exigencies would reprioritize traditional expectations.

Embracing an ethic of caring goes beyond traditional models that have been identified in school administration. Sergiovanni (1989) identified four models of administration that influence practice. According to Sergiovanni, the rational, mechanistic, organic, and bargaining models are driven, respectively, by scientific management, bureaucratic, collegial, and political theories of management. Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, and Steele (1996) recently explained that rational/scientific management emphasizes principles of scientific management whereby principals identify objectives, develop plans, determine efficiency, and closely supervise personnel to

ensure work is done efficiently. Mechanistic/bureaucratic management practices emphasize organizational strategies such as POSDCORB (Gulick & Urwick, 1937). Planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, ordering, reporting, and budgeting assume priority to ensure adherence to bureaucratic demands.

In contrast, organic/collegial management practices are more people-oriented and emphasize theories of management influenced by the work of Maslow (1970), McGregor (1960), Argyris (1964), Bennis (1989), and Likert (1967). Bureaucratic methods are modified slightly to accommodate individual needs. Bargaining/political management emphasizes organizational politics and the interplay among power, interests, and conflict.

According to Marshall, et al., (1996) several common assumptions underlie each of the aforementioned models. To varying degrees, each model stresses the following descriptions: a top-down orientation; fairness accomplished through equal application of law and policy; good leadership is value-neutral and political; effective leaders are impartial, detached, and serious; communications are formalized and hierarchical; organization is predictable; and goals are quantifiable. These models of administration, including organic or humanistic models, never challenged traditional theories of administration and leadership based on bureaucracy.

An Ethic of Caring Leadership Framework

Informed by Nodding's (1984, 1986, 1992) work on the ethic of caring, I think that framing school leadership on a radically different paradigm of "leadership as ethic of caring" that supports the notion that our task principals is essentially to support and encourage teachers while nurturing children by teaching them to be caring, moral, and productive members of society is a more useful and potentially empowering conception of school administration. As Noddings posits (1992) "The traditional organization of schooling is intellectually and morally inadequate for contemporary society" (p. 173). Although appropriate at some point in educational history, the traditional model of bureaucratic school organization no longer seems appropriate in postmodern times (Slattery, 1995). Disenchanted with increasing levels of poverty, drug abuse, illiteracy, ethnic violence, alarming ecological destruction, and the persistence of inequalities, injustices, and lack of opportunities for many Americans (Apple, 1985), a postmodernist is embued with a sense of hope (Starratt, 1993) that we, in schools for instance, may find more supportive and productive ways of relating to each other. Nurturing an "ethic of caring," principals, as do teachers, realize their ultimate motive is to inspire a sense of caring, sensitivity, appreciation, and respect for human dignity of all people despite travails that pervade our society and world.5 Noddings (1992) makes the point, "We should educate all our children not only for competence but also for caring. Our aim should be to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people" (p. xiv).

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5. An "ethic of caring" is not presumed to be a leadership model in and of itself. Rather, it can "provide an overarching framework to guide administrative decisions" (Marshall, et al., 1996, p. 278). Guided by an "ethic of caring", principals may then draw from appropriate and relevant leadership models to guide their choices. As Marshall, et al., (1996) explain: "That is, an ethic of caring can help educational leaders determine which elements of a particular leadership model or models are appropriate tools for solving the many situation- and context-specific problems they confront each day" (p. 278).

Feminist organizational theory (Blackmore, 1993; Regan, 1990) informs this "ethic of caring" by eschewing traditional conceptions of leadership. Feminist theory questions legitimacy of the hierarchical, patriarchical, bureaucratic school organization. Challenging traditional leadership models, feminist theory encourages community-building, interpersonal relationships, nurturing, and collaboration as of primary interest (Ferguson, 1984). Although much literature in the field suggests that women as educational leaders are more attuned to fostering intimate relationships that accentuate an ethic of caring (Noddings, 1992), I think that both genders are just as likely to demonstrate that they are concerned with teaching, learning, instruction, curriculum, and *people*. Some argue that because women "spend more time as teachers and as mothers before they become administrators; they produce more positive interactions with community and staff; they have a more democratic, inclusive, and conflict-reducing style; and they are less concerned with bureaucracy" (Marshall, 1995, p. 488). I am not convinced that the difference lies inherently in gender. I have known some rather officious, domineering women who demonstrate autocratic and bureaucratic tendencies at the same time I have worked with men who are nurturing and caring. Although women in our society and culture are more easily accepted as sensitive, sympathetic administrators and men less so, I think both genders have essentially the same capacity for caring and nurturing that are crucial in engendering a *spirit and ethic of caring*.

Supportive of this feminist view of school organization, Henry (1996) explains how feminist theory opposes bureaucracy:

> The feminist approach that I have developed in this study places people before mechanical rules or bureaucratic responses. Feminism stems from a concern not just with humankind, but with *all* living things and their interdependence in the universe, with a view to redefining male-female and other relations away from a notion of dominance and subordination and toward the ideal of equality and interconnectedness. . . . All human beings are seen as enriched by a feminist way of seeing and relating to the world. Instead of autonomy, separation, distance, and a mechanistic view of the world, feminism values nurturing, empathy, and a caring perspective. (pp. 19, 20)

Similarly, Noddings (1992) has led a feminist critique challenging traditional conceptions of leadership by advocating an ethic of caring "to enable schools to become caring communities that nurture all children, regardless of their race, class, or gender" (Marshall, et al., 1996, p. 276).

Unlike traditional humanistic models of administration, "caring" is inclusionary, non-manipulative, and empowering. Whereas the main objective of bureaucracy is standardization, caring inspires individual responsibility. Caring "is a situation- and person-specific way of performing in the world that requires being fully and sensitively attuned to the needs of the cared for by the person caring. Caring cannot be transformed into policies mandated from above, but caring can give form and coherence to our schools" (Marshall, et al., 1996, pp. 278-279).

Starratt (1991) also provides support for an ethic of caring in educational administration. According to Starratt, an administrator committed to an ethic of caring will "be grounded in the belief that the integrity of human relationships should be held sacred and that the school as an organization should hold the good of human beings within it as

sacred" (p. 195). (For similar views on caring and ethical behavior see, e.g., Beck, 1994; Calabrese, 1988; Greenfield, 1987).

Although defining "caring" has been difficult (Beck, 1994), scholars who have explored this topic in depth note that caring always involves, to some degree, three activities. They are: (1) receiving the other's perspective; (2) responding appropriately to the awareness that comes from this reception, and (3) remaining committed to others and to the relationship. To a large extent, caring involves a change in thinking patterns, belief systems, and mindsets. Reconceptualizing administration and supervision as caring enterprises rather than as bureaucratic processes, requires an entirely different set of definitions, meanings, and purposes. Relying on the "production metaphor" which is an outgrowth of bureaucracy is inadequate to meet the challenges of schools in postmodern times. The "metaphor of caring" is more conducive to collaboration and cooperation, which are essential components of participatory school management.

What do caring principals do? According to Marshall, et al., (1996), they "frequently develop relationships that are the grounds for motivating, cajoling, and inspiring others to excellence. Generally thoughtful and sensitive, they see nuances in people's efforts at good performance and acknowledge them; they recognize the diverse and individual qualities in people and devise individual standards of expectation, incentives, and rewards" (p. 282). These characteristics are clearly "antithetical to bureaucratic models that require standardization and uniform application of policy" (p. 282). Beck (1994) agreed: ". . . caring instructional leaders would be considerate and fundamentally noncritical. With teachers, they would assume the roles of professional colleagues, co-learners, supportive counselors, and friends" (p. 93). Caring principals put people first and policy second.6

Articulating a "new style of leadership," Raymond Callahan (1996), author of *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, recently emphasized the need to attract principals who "offer a from tough to caring, from controlling to motivating and communicating; and from overpowering to empowering their employees" approach. Callahan concluded, "I think we could use more of these qualities in our schools" (p. 14).

Implications for Improving Practice

What are the implications for improving practice among principals through an ethic of caring? Although a thorough analysis is beyond the purview of this paper, two implications are apparent. First, to what extent do our preparation programs for principals incorporate models of leadership that are guided by an "ethic of caring"? From my experience, very little, if any, attention is drawn to such a framework. Programs that integrate administrative and supervisory theories and as evidenced in publications and teaching do not reflect an "ethic of caring" framework. Marshall, et al., (1996) concurs:

> . . . recent work, the writing, teaching, and theory of administration are silent about how to incorporate caring with leadership. Few texts incorporate values and ethics, much less an ethic of care. As important, policy, structures, and practice fail to incorporate caring. No mainstream texts on educational administration and no

6. For a thorough discussion of fostering or "reclaiming" an ethic of caring in educational administration see Beck (1994).

> formal recruitment, training, and selection policies validate the caring perspective. In fact, selection and promotion policies frequently reward the antitheses of caring. (p. 289)

If our intention is to dispel images of autocratic and bureaucratic principals, then we need to examine the way we prepare and certify future principals. Without incorporating an ethic of caring framework we are likely to produce principals who are well acquainted with traditional administrative theories, but fail to realize that the main goal of instructional leadership is not bureaucratic maintenance or adherence to rigid systems of evaluations.

The role of certification and licensing in the "construction" of the "appropriate" principal deserves more attention. Does the factory of socialization, for example, evident in our current preparatory programs weed out just the people who we would want to attract in the principalship? Or, do the images portrayed of principals in pop culture make it impossible to recruit the right people? These and similar questions need addressing.

A more specific implication for the work of principals is that allowing an "ethic of caring" to guide practice would result in very different way of relating to parents, teachers, and students. Mr. Wameke, the prototypical autocrat, for instance, would value shared leadership and collaborative planning over ruling by fiat. Although collegial models of leadership would not even be considered an option for both Mr. Wameke and Mr. Joe Clark, an ethic of caring framework, it seems to me, would guide practice more equitably, justly, and ultimately, more effectively.7

Similarly, Mr. Rivelle, guided by an "ethic of caring", would never say: "Do you know what this is going to do to the school? Do you know how this is going to look?!!" Concern and caring for the individual must always supersede organizational needs. Administrative and political expediency would not guide actions of principals when an "ethic of caring" is paramount.

CONCLUSION

No attempt has been made to treat the subject exhaustively. Still, a survey of thirty-five television shows and films represents a fair sample of images of principals. From this survey, three images of principals consistently emerged8: principal-as-autocrat; principal-as-bureaucrat; and principal-as-dolt. These images clearly do not portray principals favorably. Admittedly, some positive views were noticed in television shows such as

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7. Some viewers may, in fact, see the image of Joe Clark in positive and "caring" ways. The notion that African American teachers and principals often show "caring" by being strict autocrats that do not let a child, for example, slip through the cracks may be warranted. Yet, I believe that "tough love" methods are inappropriate when working with teaching professionals.

8. Notwithstanding these themes, other views of principals have been portrayed. The image of Mr. Latimer (played by James Belushi) in the movie *Principal* sharply contrasts the rather dull and harsh leadership styles of Mr. Wameke and Mr. Bestor. Uncharacteristic of most images of principals in films and television, Mr. Latimer is assertive, non-traditional, supportive, and optimistic. Riding a motorcycle to work, Latimer represents a positive, yet atypical image of a principal.

Room 222 9 and *The White Shadow*, both appearing in the 1970s as well as in films such as the recent, *Mr. Holland's Opus*. Yet, these images were certainly exceptions given the overwhelming tendency to portray principals as dimwitted, autocratic, petty-bureaucrats.

Why have such negatives images of principals persisted? In this paper, I have indicated that the legacy of bureaucracy with its emphasis on hierarchy of authority, prescribed rules, and centralized decision-making has left a stigma on those responsible for school administration and instructional supervision. Principals, for the most part, have been portrayed as unsympathetic bureaucrats. Despite efforts to remove this stigma, vestiges of bureaucratic governance remain and are reflected in images of principals portrayed in popular culture.

Portrayals of principals as dimwitted and easily outsmarted by teachers, and especially students, demonstrate that principals need not be taken so seriously. Teachers who are the primary recipients of autocratic and bureaucratic practices of principals have few options to circumvent such practices. Often, a teacher may react to such bureaucratic practices with ambivalence, yet sometimes the only recourse might be to call the principal "a jerk." Realizing the hegemonic relationship between principals and teachers film makers capitalize on this disproportionate distribution of authority by depicting principals unfavorably.

It has been suggested that promoting an ethic of caring among principals may go a long way towards altering these negative views. Whether or not such an emphasis would alter the teachers', students', and film makers' views of principals is uncertain. What is apparent, however, is that principals sometimes contribute to their own negative image by what they do or fail to do. Principals need to demonstrate that individual needs are paramount in any effective organization. Although caring can and should be nurtured, recruiting candidates who demonstrate such qualities should be a priority. Stereotypical images of principals as humorless

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9. Principals, even when portrayed positively in shows such as *Room 222*, grapple with bureaucratic and autocratic tendencies. Mr. Kaufman (played by Michael Constantine), the affable and sage principal, is viewed as an administrator always lurking in the background, usually walking with his hands behind his back, dealing with tardy students, irate parents, and other "administrivia." As representative of the establishment, he is obligated to uphold district and state educational mandates. In the premiere episode of the series, for example, Mr. Dickson, the star African-American teacher, and his colleague and close friend the guidance counselor, Miss McIntyre, try to convince Mr. Kaufman not to transfer a bright African-American student, Richie, who lied about his residence in order to avoid going to a below par school in his neighborhood. "That's not our problem," explained the principal. "But you have to know Richie," argued Mr. Dickson. Reminiscent of Mr. Rivelle in the film *Teachers*, Mr. Kaufman retorts, "I have to know all these kids, 3000 of 'em . . . see that, now the two of you made me holler." He tries to explain that "We are not social workers, . . . I'm a principal, not a social worker." "But it's wrong to send him back," explains Miss McIntyre. Refusing to circumvent Board of Education regulations, Mr. Kaufman says, "You two are going to leave this office and think I'm a louse because that's what I have to be right now, it's part of my civil service examination . . . it said can you be a louse and I said yes, so they made me a principal." Eventually, they collaborate to "bend the rules" to allow Richie to remain a student in the school. Yet, the image of principal-as-bureaucrat, or at least the pressures of being so, are vividly portrayed.

bureaucrats no longer suffice. These images are socially constructed (Searle, 1995) and therefore can be reframed. It is not too late.

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